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A RAPID JOURNEY

FROM

THE PERSIAN GULF TO ENGLAND,

VIA THE CASPIAN,

AND

BACK VIA SYRIA AND MESOPOTAMIA.

BY

SURGEON GEO. WATERS.

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Narrative of a Journey from the Persian Gulf to England viâ Persia, the Caspian Sea, and across Europe, and back viâ France, Italy, Alexandria, Beyrout, Damascus, the Syrian Desert, Mesopotamia, and Baghdad.

Last autumn, having obtained three months' privilege leave, I determined to proceed home overland and return to duty in that space of time,—allowing one month to go, one to return, and the middle month for stay in England.

My departure having been fixed for the 19th of August, on the afternoon of that day I sailed from Bushire to Sheef in a native boat, being accompanied thus far by some friends. The passage occupied four hours, and, the atmosphere being moist and still, and the temperature high, we suffered dreadfully from the heat.

My luggage consisted of two small portmanteaux, containing two suits of outer apparel, and half a dozen changes of underclothing. After taking a little refreshment with my friends at Sheef, I bade them good-bye and set out on my journey. I was accompanied only by a groom mounted on a pack-horse, with the portmanteaux behind him. The roads having been reported unsafe from robbers, Colonel Ross furnished me with a firman from the Ameerzadah, then acting Governor of Bushire, in the absence of his father. This firman requested chiefs of districts and others, to whom I might present it, to supply me with ten guards from stage to stage, and to do anything that was necessary for my safety and comfort.

The distance from Sheef to Borazjoon is about 24 miles, or eight Persian farsukhs. Travelling all the way by road from Bushire to Borazjoon, the distance is about 40 miles. I started from Sheef at 9 P.M., and held straight across a perfectly level plain for the first 16 miles; beyond this the road became a little less even, and descended slightly to Borazjoon. The night was cool and pleasant, the atmosphere being rare and dry,—a delightful change from the sweltering heat of Bushire.

I reached Borazjoon at 4 A.M., and remained at the Telegraph Office till the afternoon of that day. Here I sent the Ameerzadah's firman to Hyder Khan, the Governor, who promised, after politely inquiring after my health, to supply me with a proper escort. On starting, however, no guards appearing, I was obliged to march on without them. Hyder

Khan, I understood, was then under the ban of Government, owing to being in arrear with the revenue, and was consequently not powerful enough to make his orders to be obeyed, hence the non-appearance of the guard.

From 10 A.M. till 3 P.M. a hot wind blew at Borazjoon, raising the temperature to upwards of 100° F. in the shade. One great advantage of this was the coolness of the water which accrued on the high degree of evaporation. The skin vessels used in the interior of the country for holding water vastly favour the reduction of the temperature of the contained liquid, as the porosity of the moist skin facilitates the abstraction of heat by evaporation.

At 3-30 P.M. on the 20th I started for Dalakee, distant from Borazjoon about 14 miles. I was obliged to travel by night, as the intense heat of the district during the day at that time of the year, was insupportable. Shortly after sunset I reached Dalakee. The road between Borazjoon and Dalakee is very good, but near the latter, the atmosphere is always disagreeable in calm weather, owing to its impregnation with the exhalations from a spring close to the roadside, the water of which is rich with iron, copper, sulphur, and petroleum. I entered the old ruinous-looking caravanserai, and rested for an hour to bait the horses. Meanwhile I was surrounded by a number of sinister-looking men, with long hair and bushy beards; these were the followers of the Khan of Khisht, an adjacent province, the Khan happening to be here at the time.

The people of the Dalakee district are about the wildest, most lawless, and ungovernable in Persia. They evidently looked upon me as a curiosity, and one of them, presumably the major-domo of some local magnate, not content with the rude scrutiny to which for some minutes he subjected my appearance, put up his hand and was about to take off my sun-hat for closer inspection, when I stopped him by suddenly administering, to his great surprise, a sharp slap on the cheek with my left hand. This response to his rude incivility was dictated by two considerations: firstly, knowing the Persians to be a polite people as a rule, I felt that this man must have been aware that his conduct was disrespectful; and, in the second place, did I permit his rudeness, there was no saying when his familiarity might extend to rough treatment; and those who have resided for any length of time in Persia, know well that the inhabitants of that country, though not generally cowardly, are yet easily put down, when inclined to be uncivil, by a decided exhibition of firmness and quick retaliation; and this plan holds good when made use of, even by a single European to a number of natives, provided always there

be no bloodshed. Such a contingency would constitute a blood-feud, and as such would entail the inevitable death of the intrepid traveller who carried matters so far. For this reason I carried no arms except a small (Deringer) pistol, which, however, I lost before reaching Shiraz.

Moral courage accompanied with caution is the best quality to rely on when travelling alone among Orientals, as they are not naturally prone to bloodshed, and even the robbers seldom do more than deprive their victims of such property as these may happen to be carrying with them.

The Khan of Khisht, to whom, as the chief authority present, I sent the Ameerzadah's firman, returned me a polite message and supplied me with an escort for the next stage.

The village of Dalakee is about 500 feet above sea-level, and is situated close to the foot of the mountain range that divides the seaside plain from the high table-land of the interior.

Konartakht is the next halting-place, and though not more than twelve miles from Dalakee, yet stands 1,300 feet above it. It is approached by a narrow winding pass, in parts steep, and in others rough and strewed with boulders. The night was almost pitch-dark, and the pass being cut off from the breeze I had to grope my way up the mountain-side with the greatest difficulty. The ascent being very rapid, and in parts dangerous, I had to walk most of the way up, leading my horse; consequently on reaching the top of the range not only my underclothing, but also my outer garments, were wet through with perspiration. At 5 A.M. on the 21st I arrived at Konartakht, and was there kindly received and hospitably entertained by Mr. Orford, Telegraph Inspector. Here I found a remarkable difference in the morning temperature, as compared with that of Bushire. The two miles' ride from the top of the pass to the village of Konartakht was delightful, after what I had just gone through, but at midday a fiercely hot wind blew, and put all my attempts to sleep out of the question.

At 4-30 P.M. I resumed my journey. The next village, Kamaridge, is distant only 10 miles from Konartakht; but thither the road lies over a second range of mountains, the ground rising from 1,800 feet above sea-level at the latter, to 2,900 at the former; and the march in consequence is by no means an easy one, either for man or beast, as the latter has to be led up most of the way. The chief of theKonartakht village provided me with guards for the district presided over by him, and the chief of Kamaridge furnished an escort as far as Shahpoor.

At Kamaridge I merely stayed a few minutes to get a drink of water, meanwhile slackening my saddle-girths for the greater comfort of the horse.

The next halting-place was Kazeroon, distant from Kamaridge about 22 miles. The road thither for the first four miles was good. From the fifth to the eighth mile you may either enter a deep and rugged ravine, or make an ascent of several hundred feet to the left of the gorge; the latter I followed, and found it very good for a mountain pathway.

Here I became quite overpowered with sleep, and wished to lie down on the ground for an hour. This was about midnight. My groom, however, prevented my indulging in the luxury of an hour's sleep, expostulating against it in the most emphatic manner, and backing his remonstrances by reminding me, that at this very spot, four months previously, Captain Napier's servants and my own were robbed of the most valuable articles of our baggage, by a band of Turk robbers; and I was thus obliged to struggle on a couple of miles further. This brought me to a guard-house, and there I lay down on the bare and stony ground, and enjoyed an hour's sleep, which quite revived me. From Shahpoor to Kazeroon the road is level and good, passing through—six miles from the latter—the ruins of what seems to have been a large town, on which now stands a dilapidated-looking village, called Dereez.

I arrived at Kazeroon a little after sunrise on the 22nd, and there rested for the day, enjoying, in the first place, a good sleep, and afterwards the pleasant company and hospitable kindness of Mr. Glover, Telegraph Inspector, then stationed at Kazeroon, since transferred to Ispahan. His appointment here was by no means a sinecure, apart from the nature of his official duties; for, six months previously, he had been attacked in the neighbouring mountains by robbers, and at first offered resistance, but soon finding that resistance, whilst covered by so many matchlocks, was worse than useless, he betook himself to flight, and narrowly escaped being shot, a bullet having passed right through the top of a small felt hat he wore at the time.

I was here informed that since the Hissam-us-Sultaneh had assumed the Governor-Generalship of Fars, the road had become perfectly safe from robbers, but received information at the same time more serious than the existence of robbers on the road. This was no less than that *a lion was in the path*, and had been destroying animals, such as horses, mules, donkeys, and bullocks, for the last two months, and, worse, that quite recently he had devoured several human beings. From robbers I apprehended nothing serious, not because I relied upon my guards, for they would most likely desert me in the moment when their services were required, but because I felt assured, from previous conviction, that these marauders would only take what little I possessed, and, at the most, strip and

leave me naked. But a man-eater was a very different matter; he would prize most what the robbers thought least of. Therefore, not content with the few guards supplied me by the acting Governor of Kazeroon, I myself hired, at a high rate of pay, a number of men to accompany me, as I understood the lion seldom attacked a party of people, preferring to pounce upon solitary individuals, in an unwary moment.

At 4-30 P.M. on the afternoon of the same day I started on my next march, the most difficult one between Shiraz and Bushire, Mr. Glover accompanying me on horseback for about three miles. I had previously travelled inland as far as Kazeroon, but no further, so that I was now on strange ground. The road leaving Kazeroon first skirts the foot of a mountain range for five or six miles in a southerly direction, then turning towards the west makes a rapid ascent by a pass built zigzag in the precipitous mountain-side, till it gains a height, at the top of the range, of upwards of 5,000 feet above sea-level. This pass is called—for what reason I failed to discover—the Kotul-i-Dochter (the pass of the girl or daughter). Philologists will perhaps find interest in the identity in pronunciation of the word for "daughter" in the Persian and the Scotch languages—if the latter can be called a distinct language.

Turning to the north, from the top of the Kotul, for about a mile the path again took a westerly direction, through an oak forest, called Dasht-i-Bar. The scenery here is wild and grand, but, as it was about midnight when I passed, I saw little of it. The hills to the right, however, presented a very romantic appearance, being studded and illumined with fires, this being the period of charcoal manufacture. The Dasht-i-Bar extends from the Kotul-i-Dochter to the Kotul-i-Peerezan (the pass of the old woman), a distance of eight miles. The ascent of the latter is gradual, so that the well-mounted traveller can ride up all the way. But, as my horse was young and rather too slender for such a journey, I dismounted and walked up the mountain, as I had done in all the passes. The caravanserai, Meyan-i-Kotul (middle of the mountain), as its name implies, is situated in a picturesque spot halfway up the mountain. Here I halted for an hour to have the horses fed, and tried to fall asleep, but failed utterly, owing to the persistent and most troublesome assaults of mosquitos.

On resuming the march, my guards remonstrated very much against travelling thus all night over mountains, where the dreaded lion had so many places of concealment, by the roadside, whence suddenly and stealthily to spring upon the unwary passer-by: arguing that men they could and would fight if necessary, but this lion was a sneaking, cowardly thief that

took a mean advantage of mankind, by crouching behind a stone or bush and thence springing upon its victim unawares. I combated their expostulations by appealing to their pride, saying that I also ran the same risk, or even greater, as I was unarmed, whilst they were each provided with a matchlock. This had the desired effect, and we continued to march on. Still there could be no doubt of the imprudence of travelling in the dark under the circumstances; but I was pressed for time, and was obliged to hurry on, trusting entirely to my attendants firing off their matchlocks every few minutes, and in this way frighten the lion out of the vicinity of our path.

The Persians seem to believe that the lion, though strong and terrible, is yet a cowardly, and all the more dangerous, animal; inasmuch as, he prowls about at night, seeking concealment during the day; approaches his prey stealthily; pounces upon a solitary person, not daring to attack a party of men; betakes himself to flight when pursued, in a skulking manner; and generally selects for victims such animals as cannot well defend themselves. I cannot recall the name at present, but I am aware of at least one English writer on natural history, who has given expression to a similar belief; and according to the written experience of Rowallen Gordon Cumming of lion-hunting in Central Africa, and the writings of others on the Bengal tiger, the latter would certainly seem to be much the nobler ammal.

At early dawn I reached the greatest elevation of the Peerezan, which is nearly 8,000 feet above the level of the sea. The topmost ridges of this range are covered with snow for nearly seven out of the twelve months of the year. On a clear day, it is said, Bushire and the sea, distant over seventy miles as the crow flies, can be descried from this spot. From the greatest elevation of the pass the road makes a rapid descent for 3,000 feet, and enters the plain of Dasht-i-Arjan (the plain of the wild almond,—some say of the birch). This place may be considered the commencement, on the southern aspect, of the high table-land which forms the bulk of the interior of the country. From Bushire this central plateau is reached by the four great gradations already mentioned. The first of these, the Kotul-i-Muloo, leads from the seaboard plain at Dalakee to the valley of Konartakht, 1,800 feet above the sea; the second, the Kotul-i-Kamaridge, leads from the latter to the plains of Kamaridge, Shahpoor, and Kazeroon, the latter 2,700 feet above the sea; the third, the Kotul-i-Dochter, conducts you to the Dasht-i-Bar (the oak plain); and the fourth crosses over the Peerezan, bringing you to the Dasht-i-Arjan (or wild-almond plain), which is pretty much on a level with the high table-land of the interior.

The village of Dasht-i-Arjan lies towards the south end of the plain, and is situated close to the foot of the range of hills which forms the western boundary of the valley. Near the village the road crosses a stream of water a few yards only from where it issues from the mountain, and at this spot there are a few large trees of great reputed age.

In a miserable den in the village I found Sergeant King, Telegraph Inspector, pale, emaciated, and then commencing with a paroxysm of fever, which quite prostrated him for the remainder of the day. Mr. King was then superintending the erection of a new house for his own occupation, and was obliged to accommodate himself the best way he could, till the new house was finished.

Dasht-i-Arjan, though occupying a very great elevation above the sea, is yet very malarious; and this circumstance I account for from the fact that the stream already alluded to, does not find its way out of the valley, by a proper outflow, but loses itself in a marshy jungle in the centre of the plain.

In the Dasht-i-Arjan graveyards I noticed several stone figures of the lion, standing over graves. On inquiry I was informed that those figures were monumental tributes of respect to departed bravery, and that slaying a lion was the feat generally considered worthy of such commemoration.

Mr. King having recovered from his paroxysm of fever in the afternoon, I bade him good-bye, with the promise that I would, on arrival at Shiraz, recommend his being sent assistance as speedily as possible.

The chief of the village of Dasht-i-Arjan duly promised to provide me with guards, but sent none. This omission, however, gave me little concern, as before sunset I knew I should be out of the lion-haunted district. Moreover, I hoped for little protection from Persian guards, in the event of being set upon by robbers; in such a contingency the former generally betake themselves to flight, and perhaps wisely, for the latter in this country seldom attack unless their number vastly preponderates, over the party they wish to despoil. Less than six robbers would not, under ordinary circumstances, attempt to plunder a single European traveller, even when totally unprotected.

I reached Khan-i-Zenioon, the next halting-place, half an hour before sunset, and there rested for an hour and a half. It is only 15 miles distant from Dasht-i-Arjan; and the road, though rather markedly undulating, is yet not difficult. Here, as at Dasht-i-Arjan, I found the Ameerzadah's firman treated with scant consideration. Guards were promised, but none appeared, and I was thus obliged to proceed unattended on a

night march; and being near Shiraz and out of danger, and my groom being well acquainted with the road, I did not much regret the absence of an escort. I always paid the men who were sent with me by authority, as well as those I hired myself, provided they accompanied me for a sufficient distance. But this did not seem to be the custom of travellers in Southern Persia, as the guards sent with me generally deserted me, one by one, after accompanying me for a short distance; whereas, being very poor, they would gladly have marched a few miles further, had they had any expectation of being rewarded. And, being indifferent as to whether they came or not, I never promised anything, thus making the reward given to those who accompanied me to the stage-end, purely an acknowledgment of fidelity to their trust. It is well, however, always to ask the chief authority of each district for an escort, in order to be able to demand from the Persian Government indemnification for what may happen to be lost by theft or robbery on the road. Failing this precaution, the claim for property so lost, would be considered invalid.

About ten o'clock at night, when within twelve miles of Shiraz, having ridden sixty without sleeping, I became so drowsy that I several times nearly fell off the horse, and, fearing accident, dismounted, lay down by the road, and fell asleep immediately my head touched the ground. But my groom, who was in continual fear of robbers, roused me up in half an hour, and insisted respectfully on proceeding on our march forthwith. The renewal of strength and spirits I derived from this short nap was more than I could have imagined possible, and I soon found myself at the caravanserai of Chenar Rahdar, six miles from Shiraz. Here I found a fresh horse and guide, kindly sent to meet me by Dr. Odling, of the Telegraph Department in Persia, who was then living in the outskirts of the city with Mr. Walker, the Superintendent of the 2nd Division.

By previous invitation I proceeded to Mr. Walker's quarters, and, arriving there about two o'clock on the morning of the 24th, met a hearty and kind reception.

This completed a journey of about 160 miles, riding all the way to Chenar Rahdar on one horse,—over ground that rises, by the gradations already mentioned, to a height of 8,000 feet above the sea, afterwards falling to a little under 5,000 at Shiraz,—in four nights and a half, thus doing double marches each night, the usual number of days occupied on the above distance being nine.

I intended to have started at sunrise that same morning for Ispahan, but postponed my departure till the following day, on learning that the post horses had just been ridden, and

were consequently unable for further work till they had rested at least 12 hours.

Mr. Walker had asked Mirza Hassan Ali Khan, the British Agent at Shiraz, to meet me at breakfast; and the latter gentleman, delivering a polite message from His Royal Highness the Hissam-us-Sultaneh, Governor-General of Fars, informed me that H. R. H. was desirous of making my acquaintance, and hoped I would not leave Shiraz without calling on him. Accordingly, in the afternoon, towards sunset, accompanied by Mirza Hassan Ali Khan (whose kindness and attention to travellers is beyond praise), I went and paid my respects to H. R. H. the Hissam (Hissam-us-Sultaneh, *Anglicè*, Sword of the state). H. R. H. received me very courteously, and kept me more than an hour in the presence. We first sat awhile in the audience-chamber, conversing and occasionally smoking a *kalyan*, drinking a tiny cup of tea or coffee after each pipe, and then strolled in the palace-garden, H. R. H. drawing my attention to such objects as he deemed worthy of special observation. This prince is a great talker. During the visit he kept up an incessant fire of conversation relative to his recent travels in Europe, in company with his august nephew, the Shah. The Hissam at last, taking breath, asked me what was the last important news from Europe, and I mentioned the escape of Marshal Bazaine from his prison in the Isle of St. Marguerite. "How did he manage it?" asked the Prince in astonishment. I replied, "By following out a scheme concocted by Madame Bazaine." This seemed to astonish H. R. H. still more, and he went on repeating the words (in Persian) "*wonderful madame!*" —evidently surprised to hear of a wife taking so much trouble for the release of her husband. After making the round of a portion of the garden, we sat down near its centre, and just as I was informing the Hissam of my regret at not being able to call on his nephew, H. R. H. the Nayeb-ul-Ayalah, Governor of Bushire, then residing at Shiraz, the Nayeb himself arrived to pay his uncle the Governor-General a visit, and, after greeting me cordially, did me the honour to inform his illustrious chief and relative that he (the Nayeb-ul-Ayalah) and myself were already firm friends. On learning that I did not intend to pay him a visit, the Governor of Bushire gently rebuked me, saying that this was unkind, and made me promise to look in on my way next morning, as his residence lay close to the Ispahan road. I then took my leave, bearing the Hissam's remembrances to such of his friends as I might meet in England. These included Sir H. Rawlinson, the Honourable Mr. Murray, once British Minister at the Court of the Shah, Captain F. Jones, Sir Lewis Pelly, Mr. Eastwick, M.P., and Major St. John, all

of whom H. R. H. had known in Persia. But as my stay at home was very short, and my time in consequence occupied, I only managed to deliver H. R. H.'s kind messages to Captain Jones and Major St. John, whom I met by accident.

During the interview, I should have mentioned, the Hissam inquired how I had been treated on the road from Bushire to Shiraz. I replied that on the whole the chiefs of the various districts treated me with civility and politeness, but that in a few instances I was not provided with an escort. Whereupon H. R. H. called for his secretary and ordered him to make a note of it, on the spot. He then asked me how much I had disbursed out of my own pocket for guards, as he intended to make the chiefs who had been remiss in politeness, to reimburse me, and to twist their ears into the bargain. But, fearing that the money would be retrenched from the poor men whom I had employed to accompany me, I said that I wished no action to be taken in the matter.

Having engaged a servant to accompany me as far as Resht, on the Caspian, and everything being arranged for my departure, I set out on the morning of the 25th on my ride to Ispahan, greatly refreshed by the rest, and the agreeable twenty-four hours I spent with Mr. Walker, whose hearty kindness I shall not readily forget.

Being a little later in starting than I had intended, and my time being limited for the journey contemplated, in order to avoid further detention I passed the residence of H. R. H. the Nayeb-ul-Ayalah, without calling. I was sorry for this afterwards, as I have since learnt that H. R. H. wished to present me with his photograph, and felt much disappointed on learning that I had gone by.

The speediest mode of travelling in Persia is by *chuppur*, that is, riding post. From Bushire to Shiraz, owing to the mountainous nature of the intervening country, an average of three and a half or four miles an hour is as much as can be done. But from Shiraz to Tehran, with few exceptions, the road is perfectly good, and suitable for cantering. My entire baggage hardly exceeded 30 lbs., and was easily carried in two carpet-bags joined at the top and slung over the horse ridden by my newly hired servant.

We cantered on pleasantly enough for about sixty miles, but were then brought to a painful stand-still. This was just before sunset, between Kawamabad and Moorghaub, when making our fourth stage since the morning, and it was my intention to accomplish a fifth before halting for the night: I should then be at Deibeed, where there is a Telegraph Office and two European officials. However, about six miles from

Kawamabad my servant's horse began to give in, and I immediately changed horses with him, thinking that without the baggage, and with the aid of my spurs and *chuppur* whip, the animal might be induced to move on a little faster. But it was only with the greatest difficulty I managed to make him go six miles further, and at last he stood stock-still, with his feet wide apart, to prevent his falling. Then, on looking down? I noticed blood on the ground, and was horrified to discover that it had dropped, and was continuing to drop, from my spurs. Dismounting instantly, I inspected the poor animal's flanks, for I very much feared that my spurs had pierced right through the skin into the abdomen. Fortunately, however, that had not taken place. The question now arose, what was to be done? I first decided to ride on myself with my little wardrobe behind me, and to send back a horse from Moorghaub for my servant. But to this plan Jaffer (for that was his name) raised a most piteous remonstrance, asserting that his life would thus not be worth an hour's purchase, as the neighbourhood swarmed with marauders, who would be certain to despatch him should he fall into their hands; for he, being a Shirazee, and presumably not unknown to them, would be likely, in their estimation, to bring them to punishment, by laying information on his return to Shiraz: in short, he dreaded falling a victim to the principle that dead men tell no tales. Moreover he declared that these robbers had an innate detestation of Shirazees, which often instigated deeds of cruelty, if not of blood. In reality Jaffer, though a picture of health and strength, was, what a Shirazee is generally reputed to be, a coward; and I had no alternative but to wait myself, sending him on to Moorghaub, whence to send back a horse for me. On my part there was not much occasion to apprehend danger from the robbers. I sent on the portmanteaux, containing all the property I then carried; and what remained they would find as difficult to turn to good account as taking certain nether garments from a "hielan'-man" is said proverbially to be. They might certainly deprive me of my saddle, bridle, and clothes; but, after all, this would not inconvenience me very much, as I should soon reach Deibeed, where these articles could be replaced.

Meanwhile, I lay down by the road in the moonlight, and, using my saddle as a pillow, slept one or two hours. Awaking, and not finding the horse that I had expected, I shouldered my saddle and bridle, and, following the road for about a mile, arrived at a river through which I could see the route evidently lay. Loth to undress, I again lay down and waited for another hour, in fruitless expectation of a horse appearing; so at last I undressed, and, taking all my gear on

my shoulders, waded the stream, which in the middle rose to a little above my waist. Then, drying myself as best I could, I put on my clothes and resumed the march, soon to meet with further disappointment. A mile's walk brought me to what I considered a second river, but which in reality was the same stream, that here has a remarkable bend in its course. Being reluctant again to wade, on account of the trouble of taking off and putting on riding equipment, I resolved first to try and find out some bridge or fordable place, whereat to cross dry-shod; and, walking down along the stream a little way, I found a place where the channel was narrow, and having in its centre a large boulder. I imagined that I could with a run jump on to the boulder, and thence with a spring clear the stream. But the moonlight deceived me; for the boulder proved to be round, and not flat as I had supposed, and much further from the surface of the water than it appeared to be: consequently my foot slipped off the stone, and I rolled up to the neck in the water,—saddle, bridle, and all. However, I held on by everything, and quickly got up on the opposite side of the stream, dripping wet. In this condition I was obliged to trudge along for another four miles, wondering if Mark Tapley could have been happy under the circumstances. Thirst now pressed very heavily upon me, and seeing a caravan encamped close to the road, I went thither to get some water, and found that this was a company of native merchants travelling to Shiraz. They treated me with that kind civility which Persians generally show to travellers. After satisfying my thirst, I accepted their offer of a *kalyan*, and sat down to rest for a little, refreshing myself with a cup of tea, which my newly made friends also were kind enough to offer me. After sitting a few minutes I descried a man coming leading a horse from the body of the caravan, who on coming up to me said I might have the use of this animal as far as Moorghaub. I saw at once how matters stood. The lazy rascal was afraid to tell me that my servant had sent him from Moorghaub with the horse, and had moreover distinctly told him where I was to be found on the road. A little cross-questioning, however, soon elicited that he had come thus far, and, finding a caravan encamped by the road, dismounted and remained chatting, smoking, and drinking tea and coffee alternately, all the time that I had had the above difficulties to contend with, and which were solely caused thus. And now for the first time, though I had been four years in the East, I administered a little corporal punishment to a native. I then ordered him to march back to look after the poor animal that I had left on the road, and galloped forward alone, trusting entirely to the instinct of the horse to find

Moorghaub; and the brute proved worthy of the reliance I placed in his sagacity, cantering along swiftly to boot.

It was thus past midnight when I arrived at Moorghaub; and I had intended to reach Deibeed, a stage further on, that evening: so that the breaking down of the horse from Kawamabad caused a shortcoming of twenty-five miles, in the distance contemplated for the day's ride. On dismounting I felt dreadfully tired, and having taken some preserved soup, followed by a little brandy and water, lay down on a very hard bed indeed, but slept soundly nevertheless, till sunrise next morning. For the two years prior to this I had suffered much from fever in Bushire, and under ordinary circumstances would most certainly have had a paroxysm after such a wetting as I have described; but, thanks to the fresh dry air, the exercise, and the excitement of the novel journey, I escaped altogether this time. Next morning I felt as well as possible, only painfully stiff about the loins and in the lower extremities. The distance travelled by this the first day's ride was 75 miles, that being the distance between Shiraz and Moorghaub.

Before starting for Deibeed on the morning of the 26th, I was amused to learn from the man I had sent back to look after the broken-down horse, that the owner of that animal, when coming to bring his horse back from Moorghaub, on arriving at the spot where I lay sleeping, and the horse standing on the road unable to move, knowing what was the case, was cautious not to wake me, and, retiring to a little distance, hid himself till I got up and marched on. I had not hitherto experienced being looked upon as a wild and savage animal, and could not but feel amused at the idea. This showed, at all events, that these people are accustomed to that rough treatment from Europeans which, though I dare say it is often deserved, cannot yet be reconciled with true manliness, on the part of the latter. For it frequently happens, that the person who receives the blow, could easily crush his assailant, and yet seldom retaliates, remaining quiet and humble under the humiliating consciousness of his poverty and dependence. The man now addressing me, went further; he reminded me that I had given him a little chastisement, and though he did not deny having deserved it, yet hoped I should not forget him. The sum of my remembrance of him amounted to a *kran* = a franc, which he received greedily and ungratefully. Indeed it is no libel when I say that ingratitude is one of the leading characteristics of a Persian. Persians are also prone to traducing one another. The *chuppurchee* (overseer or master of the post house and horses) at Moorghaub told me, for instance, that his neighbour of Kawamabad, who had mounted me so

badly, "never fed his horses properly, not allowing the poor animals any barley—the *pedder sukhta* (son of a burnt father) that he was!"

At noon I reached Deibeed, where I took breakfast. The climate of this place formed a delightful contrast to that of Bushire. Here there seems always to be a cool breeze, even in the hottest season of the year; whilst Bushire, from the middle of July to the middle of September, is simply steaming. For, though the temperature of the latter seldom exceeds 95° F. in the shade, yet so great is the humidity of its atmosphere, that there is generally only four degrees of difference between the wet and dry bulb thermometers; and this is what makes the heat of Bushire so notoriously oppressive.

At the next stage after Deibeed I found the horses so bad that I was obliged to have the Deibeed horse re-saddled, and rode him a second ordinary day's journey. The poor little beast was thus ridden about forty-eight miles in less than five hours. A third and fourth stage brought me to Abadeh, where I rested for the night, at the Telegraph Office, the distance travelled this the second day being about ninety miles. Fortunately the fatigue from which I suffered in the morning had now completely worn off, and I felt as fresh as possible; but not so my man Jaffer, of whom more anon.

Between Shiraz and Abadeh I heard numerous reports of recent dire mishap to travellers, from robbery and ill-treatment; but nothing of the sort, I am happy to say, visited me, and I hardly think the firman with which H. R. H. the Hissam was kind enough to supply me, could have hindered any one from attacking me that felt so inclined. For I travelled so fast that the news of my being under H. R. H.'s "shadow" could not have gone ahead. It can only be said, therefore, either that the reports of rapine were gross exaggerations, or that I was lucky. I found the firman very useful, however, in procuring me ready service at the post-houses; without it, I should have had to put up with various vexatious detentions.

Leaving Abadeh early on the morning of the 27th, I reached Koomeshah, distant 80 miles from Abadeh, in the evening, and there stopped for the night. Setting out early the following morning, I reached Ispahan, a distance of 50 miles, by noon. Arriving at the latter, I went straight, by previous invitation, to a house occupied by Mr. George Mackenzie, and stayed four hours. This verily was to me a paradise. After riding nearly 300 miles in a little over three days, in a hot dry climate, it was no ordinary pleasure to be conducted into a nice arbour, fronting a pretty little house, at the door of which I was met by Mr. Mackenzie and Dr. Wills, Medical Officer to the Telegraph

Department in Persia, both of whom, I felt sure, were very glad to see me, and who then showed me into a cosy room furnished with a mixture of comforts belonging to the Orient and the West, which greeted the eye most pleasantly. And still more gratifying to my parched lips and thirsty soul was the refreshing draught of iced beer with which my friends, with kind thoughtfulness, at once supplied me. Wines of various kinds have been immortalized in verse and song. But could I propitiate the Muse, even for a brief moment, I should address an ode to beer,—not that I would recommend it as a beverage for ordinary everyday use in preference to good water, but when the body is considerably exhausted with unusual exertion, as was mine in this instance, nothing, in my humble opinion, is so refreshing, and at the same time fortifying, as a cool glass of good beer. There is something in it which at first refreshes and restores the jaded appetite, and afterwards enhances the enjoyment of repose. But whilst on the road, especially when exposed to the hot rays of an autumn sun in the East, the use of wines or spirits of any kind whatsoever is contra-indicated by the fact that alcohol vitiates the power of resisting either extreme heat or cold, and consequently diminishes the capacity for enduring fatigue. It is only when the necessity for exertion is at an end, for at least a few hours, that a little alcoholic stimulant can be indulged in, not only with impunity, but advantage. Here I was further regaled with a variety of fruits in ice. Such large and delicious peaches, pears, and apricots I had not tasted, or even seen, before. The climate of Ispahan cannot be surpassed for excellence; and were it possessed of the advantages of European civilization, it would, I am sure, become a much sought-after retreat for invalids, especially those suffering from general debility or affections of the chest. Supplies of most kinds are procurable, and ice or compressed snow can always be had in abundance. Indeed I have little doubt but that when Persia becomes blessed with railways in connection with Europe, Ispahan will get to be known and made use of, as a sanitarium.

At 4 P.M. I again set out, and rode two stages before sleeping, stopping for the night at Moorchikhor. I would have ridden another stage, 30 miles from Ispahan, that evening, but Jaffer declared this to be impossible, as he could not be certain of the road by the light of the moon only. I understood, however, from his woe-begone countenance, that he had other reasons, very cogent in their way, for wishing to come to a halt for the night as soon as possible.

Next morning, the 29th, I started at daylight, and arrived at Beediskh about 9-30. This was a very trying ride, for my horse not only required continual urging to make him break out of

a walk, but was so utterly inelastic in his movements, that I might as well have been mounted on an equestrian automaton. Before reaching Beediskh most of the animal's tail had disappeared. This requires explanation. It is in the power—by right of custom I suppose—of *chuppur* travellers who have been badly mounted to cut off the mane and hair of the tail of the horse that has given dissatisfaction. This custom being known, no traveller will, if he can avoid it, take a horse thus temporarily mutilated. But I fancy the dominant incentive to this measure is revenge, instead of solicitude about the comfort of travellers that may come after. The horse I suffered so much on, had been deprived of the hair of the tail only, and the owner had concealed the disfigurement by an artificial supplement, which dropped off on the way.

Near Beediskh, at a place called Soh, where there is a Telegraph Station, I breakfasted with the Inspector, his wife and another lady, and whilst at table, Jaffer made his appearance at the door, and apprised me that for the present he could proceed no further. Being taken rather by surprise, I asked why. This was imprudent on my part, for the ladies knew Persian as well as, if not better than, myself; and Jaffer not only told me in lucid language the reason why he could proceed no further, but was also about to enter into particulars, offering at the same time ocular illustration of the truth of his assertion. I therefore immediately told him to withdraw, and that I would see to the matter presently. Jaffer, as I dare say the reader will have guessed, suffered from saddle-soreness; and this generally is the reason of the breaking down of servants previously unaccustomed to riding on a *chuppur* journey. I was obliged to grant Jaffer his dismissal, paying him for the time he had been with me, with an additional sum to pay his travelling expenses back to Shiraz.

When one wishes to travel fast in this country, the best plan is to dispense altogether with the company of a private servant, as those to be found here seldom hold out well, and, as happened in my case, are of no use whatever. Jaffer, immediately he arrived at a *chuppur-khanah* (post-house), stretched himself on the ground, *face downwards*, and, unless to eat or drink, never moved till fresh horses were saddled. Indeed, I got on much faster and fared better without him, by engaging a fresh man from each *chuppur-khanah*. The men belonging to the post-houses, moreover, know what horses at each stable to select, and know also the best means of making them go along, and for a few krans will do all the service that a traveller under such circumstances requires.

Early in the afternoon I reached Koh-i-Rood, and thence, immediately the saddles were transferred to fresh horses,

commenced the third and last stage for the day. From Koh-i-Rood to Kashan the distance is 38 miles, and for half the way the road is very undulating and winding, lying along a ravine, the bottom of which forms the head of a river, which thus finds its way through a range of mountains. In winter this part of the road is frequently difficult and sometimes impossible to get over, from being enveloped in snow.

On arriving at Kashan I was kindly and courteously received by Mr. S——, the Telegraph Inspector then stationed there; the distance travelled this day was about 80 miles.

Starting at 7 o'clock A.M. on the 30th, and riding at a good rate, I accomplished two short stages by midday. This brought me to Pasangoon. Here I went to the *balla-khanah* (upper story of the post-house) to partake of some cold fowl I had brought with me. At the head of the stairs I was met and kindly received by an officer of the Persian army, of the rank of *yâwar* (major), who happened to be resting there at the time. He invited me to sit down on his carpet, but as my own railway rug was at hand I preferred using it, as bread-crumbs were likely to be scattered about. He then offered me tea, and afterwards a pipe, and repeated this politeness when I had finished my meal, remarking at the same time that I had eaten no more than a child. In return for this civility I offered him the only thing I had to spare, viz. brandy, and did so with great embarrassment. All Persians belong to one of two classes with respect to alcoholic liquor,—those who not only never taste it, but are insulted by the offer of it, and those who are passionately fond of it. Now the question was, to which class did my obliging and kind friend belong? I was soon relieved. On asking his yawarship if he would have some brandy and water, he replied *chera*, a word of multifarious meaning, and signifying, why not—of course—why; perhaps "can a duck swim?" would be the most faithful rendering of the word in this instance. Accordingly I gave him some, and five minutes afterwards he asked for some more, and received a limited quantity for one draught. He preferred drinking the brandy undiluted. His eyes now began to sparkle, and he burst out in praise of brandy, not only above other spirituous liquors, but also above everything else in the world. Before I left he made a little speech, thanking me at the beginning, in Persian fashion, for the favour that I had conferred upon him by sitting under the same roof with him; then for the heavenly beverage, which already had almost transported him to paradise; and ending with the hope that I would leave him a mouthful for future use, and that I would excuse his shameful unmannerliness in preferring such a request. I filled up my little flask out of the one bottle I possessed, and left

the bottle with him two-thirds full. This on my part was, I confess, questionable conduct, still I could not make up my mind to disappoint his earnest solicitude. This incident of my journey I relate, to give the reader some insight into the Persian character; for this man was a type of a large class—irreligious though bigoted, greedy though polite, and beggarly and shameless though brimful of conceit.

Koom was the next stage. The horses on this portion of the road were so good that I often managed twelve miles an hour. On arriving at Koom early in the afternoon, I decided on riding right on to Tehran, without stopping during the night, as the road was, I understood, good, and there was beautiful moonlight; moreover, the road from Koom to Tehran lying across a salt desert, it would have been too hot for riding through in the daytime. And again, riding right on to Tehran that night would leave me a day clear, and this was a great object, my time being so limited. This was certainly pretty hard work, for it kept me twenty-two hours in the saddle. The entire distance from Kashan to Tehran being 150 miles, I thus completed the journey from Shiraz to Tehran, a distance of about 580 miles, in six days precisely.

At Tehran, Drs. Baker and De Haig kindly came to meet me at the Indo-European Telegraph Office, and we drove out to Gulahek, the summer retreat of English residents in the Persian capital, where, by previous invitation, I became the guest of Major Smith, Director of the Telegraph Department in Persia. In the afternoon I paid my respects to H. E. Taylour Thomson, C.B., British Minister at the Persian Court, and called upon some of the members of His Excellency's staff. Later in the afternoon I made one of a party who went to witness a review of a portion of the Persian army in a field close by. Altogether there were about 6,000 men reviewed, including cavalry, infantry, and artillery. H. I. M. the Shah, holding up a red umbrella (one of the emblems of Persian royalty), was mounted on his now celebrated white Arab charger, the tail of which, as usual, was dyed magenta. The men were well clad though indifferently accoutred, and as regards physique, superior, vastly superior, to the average British soldier. The orders were speedily carried, and executed promptly and well, and the whole affair gave general satisfaction to the lookers-on. But what interested and attracted us most was the astonishing equestrian feats performed at the close of the day's manœuvres by the Bakhtiari horsemen. These performances it would be difficult to describe, but I can safely say, they excelled everything I had previously seen, even in Hengler's circus.

From Tehran to England I had the good fortune to have the company of Dr. De Haig, who had previously travelled in Russia, and knew a little of the language.

We started early on the morning of the 1st of September, and galloping or cantering all day, the horses being first-rate, reached Kasveen, a distance of 100 miles from Tehran, a little after sundown. We stayed overnight at the residence of Mr. Natali, the Telegraph Inspector, whose kind politeness to travellers has now passed into a proverb; the next day, the 2nd September, owing to the hilly nature of the ground, we only rode 70 miles, and arrived at Resht on the afternoon of the 3rd. The road for the last 50 miles approaching Resht lies through a dense forest of almost every variety of trees, some of them, especially the poplar and the plane, towering over a hundred feet high.

Being furnished with a letter of introduction from Major Smith to M. Serjpotouski, Russian Consul at Resht, we proceeded to his residence, and were kindly welcomed by that gentleman. As only three miles of riding now remained between us and the Caspian, the posting part of the journey may be considered at an end, and I will therefore give a brief *résumé* of the distance travelled between Bushire and Resht.

From Bushire to Shiraz, travelling at night, on account of the heat :—

August, night of the		Miles.	Elevation.
19th	Bushire to Borazjoon :.....	25	Level.
20th	Borazjoon to Dalakee	14	500 feet.
„	Dalakee to Konartakht	12	1,800 „
21st	Konartakht to Kamaridge ...	11	2,900 „
„	Kamaridge to Kazeroon.....	21	2,700 „
22nd	Kazeroon to Meyan-i-Kotul .	18	6,500 „
„	Meyan-i-Kotul to Dasht-i-Arjan.	12	4,600 „
23rd	Dasht-i-Arjan to Khan-i-Zenioon	18	6,000 „
„	Khan-i-Zenioon to Shiraz ..	18	4,700 „

Arrived in Shiraz a little after midnight, thus completing the journey of nine ordinary marches in four nights and a half.

Stayed on the 24th in Shiraz.

From Shiraz to Tehran :—

Date.		Miles.
August 25th	Shiraz to Moorghaub	75
26th	Moorghaub to Abadeh	80
27th	Abadeh to Koomeeshah	80
28th	Koomeeshah to Ispahan	50
„	Ispahan to Moorchikhor	35
29th	Moorchikhor to Kashan	80
30th	Kashan to Tehran	150

Arrived in Tehran in the early morning of the 31st, thus completing the journey of over 550 miles, in six days precisely. Stayed over 31st in Tehran.

			Miles.
September	1st	Tehran to Kasveen	100
,,	2nd	Kasveen to ——*	75
,,	3rd	——* to Resht	70

Arrived in Resht on the afternoon of the 3rd.

The average distance travelled daily, as will be seen from the above figures, was about 90 miles; of course the ground gone over in any one day, depended on the horses and the nature of the road. I found that with five relays of good horses, on tolerably level road, I could manage 100 miles per diem comfortably; whereas 70 miles a day with bad horses was simply killing work. I wore tight-fitting riding trowsers of Bedford cord, over which was a pair of thick but pliable leather gaiters, and hunting spurs; and got along very comfortably. But I think the best riding equipment for such a journey would be buckskin breeches with top-boots and spurs.

It is of course best to travel with as little weight as possible; and as regards provisions, little weight or bulk need be taken up with them, as milk and fruit, eggs and bread, could generally be procured along the road in my experience, and chicken on the shortest notice. I would simply recommend, then, a tin of hotch-potch to be taken from the starting-point for each day the journey is calculated to last. This soup, under the circumstances, is much preferable to all others, as it contains a substantial quantity of most of the necessary elements of nutrition. A flask of brandy it may be as well to have, but I would limit the use of it to an ounce daily with water, taken before retiring for the night. I only used half a small flaskful of brandy during a ride of 900 miles. Thus the entire requirements for the journey, including a spare suit of outer apparel, six changes of under-clothing, a couple of towels, and the few articles of food that it is necessary to take, need not exceed 40 pounds in weight. A good, light, well-fitting pith hat, secured round the chin with a piece of tape, is the best protection for the head, and strong leather gloves for the hands. Goggles of a neutral tint, or London smoke-colour, not only protect the eyes from glare, but also impart a semblance of coolness to the hot bare aridity of the Persian landscape. It is well also to wear a fold or two of muslin or gauze across the face, covering the mouth and nose thoroughly, and tied at the back of the head; the atmosphere being so dry, and

* I forget the name of this place.

evaporation increased by the rapid motion, that, unprotected, the skin of the face, and especially the mucous membrane of the mouth and nostrils, would soon become chapped and tender. Pain in the throat, cough, and even bronchitis, are not unlikely consequences of neglect of this precaution. I ate very sparingly, though in perfect health, and felt an appreciable diminution in weight day by day; but concurrently my spirits rose, and my energies increased, till eventually the day's ride became a mere pastime.

On the morning of the 4th we started for Enzoli, the Persian port on the Caspian, and riding for three miles on post-horses, dismounted for good, at a small village called Peeri Bazaar, and here embarking in the frailest boat I ever witnessed, lay down very uncomfortably in the stern, to be pulled against the wind and rain to Enzoli. In the course of half an hour we were obliged to put about and return to Peeri Bazaar. A storm of wind and rain now arose, continuing all that day and night, but becoming a little calmer towards morning. At dawn on the 5th the storm having considerably abated, we again embarked for Enzoli, and, crossing an arm of the Caspian, arrived there in the course of two hours. We had now the mortification to learn that, on account of the surf on the Enzoli bar, the steamer on which we were to have taken our passage to Astrakhan had passed the port, standing a long way out at sea. We were thus left with the dreary prospect of a week's stay in the miserable little fishing village of Enzoli, and were it not for the kindness of M. Ugloff, the Russian Agent, to whom we had a letter from the Russian Consul, I don't know what we should have done to get lodgings.

Strolling along the creek in the afternoon, we saw a small steamer lying in port, and boarding her ascertained from the captain, a Persian, that this, the S.S. *Wolga*, was to leave next day for Baku, where she was expected to arrive in two days. I opined that it would be better to cast in our lot with the captain than to stay in Enzoli; as it would certainly be less unpleasant to pass our period of unavoidable detention in a rising Russian town, than in a Persian fishing village, the goodness of M. Ugloff notwithstanding; and then there was always the chance, I thought, of finding at the port of Baku, some trading steamer bound for Astrakhan, which might perhaps arrive at the latter as soon as the mail steamer that we had missed. Accordingly we embarked in the S. S. *Wolga* on the 6th, and arrived in Baku on the 8th. This voyage was only sustainable by our anxiety to proceed on the journey. We had to share the tiny saloon with the captain and two others, all lying on mattrasses on the floor. The diet on board con-

sisted of boiled fowl, mutton broiled, or cut up into small chops and roasted on a spit, kabobs and pilau, the latter consisting of rice first boiled and afterwards incorporated with clarified butter, and mutton or chicken broth. The pilau was, as is customary, heaped up on a large tray, the top of the cone of pilau being truncated to give space for the boiled fowl, torn limb from limb, or kabobs, as the case might be. Each person was supplied with a plate, but of course I carried my own fork, knife, and spoon, as Orientals are not in the habit of using such articles. The captain after passing the *kalyan* he had just smoked, used to say *bismillah* (*bismillah* really means "*in the name of God,*" but the Scotch "*fa' to*" would be the proper meaning in the above instance), and this was the signal for commencing operations. Being a very poor sailor, and the swell caused by the storm of wind and rain not yet having disappeared, I soon had to lie down on my back, and remained pretty much in this position for the two nights and intervening day that the voyage occupied. On the approach of meal hours, nevertheless I sometimes felt as if I could manage to eat something. But this spurious appetite never once survived the captain's method of doing the honours of the table. He very politely used to select for me such titbits as he fancied would coax the jaded appetite of a sick brother. But it never seemed to strike the worthy man that helping me with his hands—which, to make matters worse, were not so clean as it was possible to make them—was the cause of the sudden disappearance of my desire to eat. On my lying back from the dish, he would say *daraya khylie haram zadah ast*, a form of reproach signifying low birth, applied, however in the above instance to the sea, and is frequently made use of in deprecation of things inanimate.

To my great delight, on arriving at Baku, I found that the mail steamer we had missed at Enzoli, had not yet left for Astrakhan, but was to start in a couple of hours; I therefore had my portmanteaux immediately transferred to the Russian steam vessel from the S. S. *Wolga*, and bidding good-bye to the captain of the latter, receiving at the same time his *Khuda hafiz !* "God be with you!" went on shore faint with hunger, in search of something more palatable than the fare on board the *Wolga*.

Here I found a tolerably good hotel, kept by an Italian, and was speedily provided with food, which I as speedily devoured. Here I also exchanged the Persian krans for Russian money. Baku swarms with money-changers, and though these are a sharp class of people as a rule, I yet think they treated me fairly well. For I found on arriving in London that notwithstanding the various exchanges I had to have recourse to, viz. from rupees to krans, from krans to Russian imperials

and roubles, and partially from roubles and imperials to Polish money, thalers, and British currency, I lost little or nothing by the several transactions; and this was not in the least due to any management of mine, as I was utterly ignorant of international financial technicalities. So much, then, for the honesty of the money-changing fraternity in Baku. In London I got 16*s.* 2*d.* for each Russian half-imperial, and 2*s.* 8*d.* for each paper rouble.

Early on the afternoon of the 8th the mail steamer *Turcoman* weighed anchor. This ship, though, as I was told, by no means a good specimen of the line of steamers to which she belongs, was yet comfortable, containing two saloons (one exclusively for the use of lady passengers) furnished with sofas all round, which served at night for sleeping purposes, as there were no separate cabins except that occupied by the captain, and was thus a great improvement on the *Wolga*. On all steamers on the Caspian, petroleum, of which the adjacent springs furnish an enormous supply, is used for fuel, and, besides being much cheaper than coal, is also much less disagreeable to those on board, as it causes neither smut nor smell. In course of conversation with the kind commander of the *Turcoman* I learnt that the expenses attending the use of naphtha as fuel for the production of steam, was about one-fourth the cost of coal for the same purpose.

Here, on board the *Turcoman*, I noticed that each Russian traveller carries his or her own pillow,—a very good system, and one, moreover, for which English travellers ought to be thankful. On the 9th we reached Derbend, a small town strongly fortified, and in the same evening Petrovsk, another small town containing a fort, a large garrison, and several churches. Petrovsk is considered an important military base-point by the Russian Government, and the entrance to it by sea being difficult to navigate, to obviate this an extensive breakwater was constructed; but unfortunately, from faulty design and bad construction, the roadstead is now more difficult to reach than it was before the breakwater existed.

From Baku, besides Dr. De Haig and myself there was only one other-first class passenger, a Polish gentleman. At Derbend our number was increased by an officer of the Russian army, a short thick-set middle-aged man with a kindly expression of face, and, as we had reason to know afterwards, his face did not belie his character. At Petrovsk five other passengers joined us, two gentlemen and three ladies; the ladies, however, dined in their own cabin.

The fare on board the S. S. *Turcoman* was very good, but the system of charging separately for so many articles of

food that ought to be included in the dinner bill made the table rather expensive. Before dinner the Russians, as a rule, take what they call a *sakouska*, corresponding very much to our last courses in England, with the addition of sherry, port, claret, or *vodkee* (a spirit almost identical with Scotch whiskey, and much drunk by the middle and lower classes in Russia), according to taste; *vin ordinaire*, a sort of burgundy manufactured in the Caucasus, was provided at dinner. English beer could also be had, at a high figure. Russian beer was procurable always at a moderate price, but was not very palatable to an Englishman, at all events. Strange to say, the Russians are passionately fond of English porter, considering it a more elegant and palatable beverage than any wine; for this reason the Russian Government lay a very high import duty on this article of consumption, making thus the retail price enormously high. For a quart bottle of stout you pay three roubles—about eight shillings.

The last arrivals on board were a party of five, consisting of a young Russian advocate, his sister and his aunt, with the son and daughter of the latter. The other young gentleman was then a cadet at the Diplomatic Training College at St. Petersburg. Both gentlemen spoke English and French well, and could also speak German, in addition to Russ, their mother-tongue, and as regards English spoke it, as Russians generally do, without that foreign accent that we find so much of in the English of a Frenchman or a German. The advocate was very polite, companionable, and extremely obliging. Indeed, were it not for the many good offices which he cheerfully rendered us, I am not sure that our transit through Eastern Russia would have been accomplished without some inconvenience, on account of our ignorance of the Russian language. He was, further, so good as to press us to take St. Petersburg on our way homewards, and said he would have much pleasure in showing us the lions of the Russian capital: offering thus to spend with us the few days he had to spare before the commencement of the session, he having not yet completed his law studies. But I explained the necessity for my passing hurriedly through the continent. "Ah," said he, "I am sorry; your direct route lies through the most uninteresting part of the empire, and you English are given to writing in general terms of a country from a glance at a strip of it." This was before we parted at Griasi, and I replied, "If I have reason to speak so highly of Russia and the Russians throughout, as I have had since coming first into Russian territory, eight days ago, my account of both will bear to be read by the most loyal subjects of the Czar without dissatisfac-

tion or protest." This was acknowledged by a raising of the hat with the *Frenchest* of inclinations. On the night of the 9th we were obliged to anchor off the port of Petrovsk, owing to the difficulty of entrance to the harbour. On the morning of the 11th we arrived at the Astrakhan anchorage called the "Nine-foot," there being only this depth of water at the spot. Passengers and cargo were here transhipped into a large barge, the saloon of which was fitted up in magnificent style. A powerful paddle-tug then towed us up to Astrakhan in the course of sixteen hours. At the mouth of the Volga for the first 15 or 20 miles the banks on either side were only perceptible in the distance. Afterwards the river narrowed to about half a mile in width, maintaining this breadth all the way to Czaritzen with little variation. The Volga flows into the Caspian by a number of mouths of very variable course, the country here being perfectly level and composed of fine argil, which is easily furrowed by water. One mouth may thus be the navigable channel one year, and another the next.* For the first hundred miles from the Caspian the country on both sides of the river is level and productive, and inhabited by the Kalmucks, whose mosques are the chief feature of each little town or village. These people, formerly so difficult to tame, and who held out so long against the wave of Russian conquest, are now peaceable, industrious, and orderly; and the generality of them speak the Russian language, as well as their own.

We only arrived at Astrakhan an hour after sunset, and were thus deprived of a sight of this ancient but now much modernized town, as the river steamer was to start for Czaritzen at midnight; accordingly we again transhipped and lay down to sleep.

The voyage up the Caspian was most delightful, the temperature being so mild as not to necessitate an awning, or even the use of a sun-hat. In winter this sea is subject to violent storms, becoming most tempestuous in an incredibly short space of time.

Proceeding up the Volga we had sturgeon on the table almost every meal in some shape or other, and caviare of course; but of the latter I can say little, as I never managed to overcome the repugnance to it, that the first taste of it engendered. The river steamer was still better than the *Turcoman*, having a large saloon beautifully fitted up with red velvet covered sofas and cushions, and numerous mirrors; and containing several private state-rooms for married couples, or such as chose to pay the additional fare incurred by the use of them. Each

* From November till April the Volga is frozen up, so that travellers by this route must then drive in a sleigh from Astrakhan to Czaritzen.

meal was provided *à la carte*, on which the price of every item was written or printed opposite to it.

We arrived at Czaritzen, the railway terminus, on the morning of the 13th. This is a straggling town, containing, as is usual with Russian towns, some nice-looking churches, and several rows of detached comfortable-looking houses. The street and bazaar swarmed with those long-bristled pigs to be found only in Russia, and in the open spaces flocks of very fine geese were almost invariably to be seen.

The railway station was provided with a superb dining-hall, where there was a *table d'hôte* at stated hours, waiters being also in constant attendance, for the convenience of those who might require refreshment at odd moments. All the chief stations on the line I travelled by in Russia, were thus supplied with all the paraphernalia of a first-class hotel; and so were matters arranged that passengers found plenty of time to take refreshment on the way, placing the usual everyday interval between meals.

We took out our tickets as far as Smolensk, and started for Griasi, the first principal station on the line, at 7 o'clock on the same evening, and reached the latter at noon next day, and, changing carriages, had to stop there several hours for the arrival of the engine that was to take us to Orel.

The Russian railway carriages are fitted up somewhat, I believe, in the American style, having every convenience for travelling long distances on a stretch; and wood being used for fuel makes railway travelling in Russia much more comfortable than it is in Western Europe or England. Indeed the change in this respect was disagreeably obvious when we entered Germany, where coal is used.

Orel, the next principal station, was reached on the following day, viz. the 15th, where there was a stoppage of some hours, as was customary at the large stations. This is already a large town, containing many fine buildings, particularly churches.

Late in the afternoon of the 15th the train reached Smolensk. The ordinary route from this to Berlin is viâ Dunaberg, far away to the north, where this line of railway joins the main trunk from St. Petersburg to the capitals of Western Europe; on account of the recent opening of a new line, however, we found that we could proceed to Ostend as quickly by going viâ Warsaw, and spend sixteen hours in that city, the distance from Eastern Russia to Western Europe being thus so much shortened. Accordingly we decided on taking this opportunity of paying a cursory visit to the famous capital of Poland, the sanguinary scene of so many struggles for religion and for

liberty; and, with the assistance of the kind Russian officer who had been our fellow-passenger from Derbend, on the Caspian, I took out two tickets for Warsaw, whilst Dr. De Haig looked after the transfer of our baggage from the Dunaberg to the Warsaw train. Never dreaming that the train was on the eve of starting, after finding Dr. De Haig, I went back to look for the obliging old gentleman (who, though not knowing a word of English or French, yet contrived to understand all our wants), intending to ask him to have, as a parting cup, a draught of the much-prized English porter. On seeing us, however, the veteran raised his eyebrows in surprise, laid hold of my arm, conducted me to the train, and with a significant gesture led me to understand that it would start immediately; and sure enough it began to move. We then sprang into a carriage, thus unceremoniously parting with the kind-hearted man, whose last act of kindness saved us a whole day's detention.

Late on the following evening we arrived at Warsaw, thus completing the trans-Russian journey in three days and a few hours. The route above sketched lies through a level country, here and there relieved by large districts of gentle undulation, varied by enormous stretches of forest, in which grow chiefly the pine, the birch, the plane, the poplar, and the ash. The open ground all along the line, and as far on either side as the eye could reach, was under cultivation, producing immense quantities of wheat. The soil in Eastern Russia is first-rate, but agriculture is in a miserably primitive condition. Westward, towards Silesia, the soil is rather poorer, but, owing to a more advanced system of cultivation, produced, I was told, better crops. Indeed I have little doubt but that with better cultivation the district traversed by this line of railway would become ten times more productive than it now is, and we may reasonably suppose that the case is similar throughout the greater part of this vast empire; what a grand prospect, therefore, Russia has before her! Instead of emigration as a sluice for the outflow of increased inhabitants, Government has simply to see to the further development of the internal resources of the country.

So far as my short experience went, I feel bound to speak well of the Russians, and our learned fellow-passenger, the advocate, added an immense fund of useful information regarding the country, to his other kindnesses. As a people, they seem to be most industrious, intensely loyal to the reigning house of Romanoff, patriotic, most obliging to strangers, and, it struck me, particularly so to the English. As a race they are mostly strong and well formed, and the fairer portion often very handsome. Among the upper classes the gentlemen invariably wear clothes

of English cut, while the ladies, like their sisters all over Europe, are partial to the *mode Parisienne.*

On entering Poland one becomes very much struck with the different cast of countenance of the people, as compared with the Russians. The Poles are very handsome as a rule, and particularly the fair portion of them. At a small station near Warsaw I saw a party of ladies, mostly young (who had evidently come to see some friends off in the train), some of whom possessed face and figure of exquisite perfection; and the complexion of one of them was singularly rare, having luxurious flaxen hair, large lustrous hazel eyes, with sweeping eyelashes, and face beautifully cut though exsanguine. I had almost said I had not seen so much beauty, no, not in England.

Warsaw is well worth a visit. It is a quiet handsome old city, with the majority of the streets narrow, and occupying consequently but comparatively small space, yet containing many fine public buildings; prominent among these are two magnificent Roman Catholic churches, which from the number and variety of relics they contain of sacred and historic interest, as well as the architectural beauty of the edifices themselves, will always repay the trouble of a visit, not only to those who make a study of such subjects, but also to every person of ordinary education and culture.

Warsaw is well supplied with beautiful shops of every description, and possesses a fine public park, while the magnificent iron suspension bridge that spans the Vistula, is perhaps one of the most striking features of the city. And on the outskirts are several nicely kept public gardens, in which concerts and theatrical entertainments are frequently held. This city seems to be the endemic home of a peculiar disease of the scalp, entailing rapid loss of hair; and this is the reason why we see so many of the inhabitants, particularly females of the lower classes, wearing wigs. The Polish silver currency is of little more intrinsic value than copper, of which indeed it almost entirely consists. It is well, therefore, to bring as little of it as possible out of Polish territory.

On the afternoon of the 17th we took the train to Berlin, where we arrived the following morning. At Alexandrovna, where the line crosses the Russo-German frontier, we changed into German carriages (of narrower gauge than the Russian, and of English pattern generally), had our luggage passed, and our passports *viséd.*

The officials of both countries were very civil to us, but all German luggage underwent the strictest scrutiny by the custom-house officers of both countries.

In the forenoon of the 18th we resumed our journey, and, pro-

ceeding viâ Hanover, Cologne, Brussels, and Ostend, reached London on the evening of the 19th of September: thus completing the journey from Bushire, on the Persian Gulf, to England in 30 days, and beating the mails by at least a week, as they are carried first to Bombay, by the B. I. S. N. Co., in 16 or 17 days, and take 22 days more in reaching England, even viâ Brindisi, the fastest route. It must be admitted, however, that in many respects I was lucky, particularly as regards weather, which in Persia was not very hot for the time of the year, and on the Caspian and while crossing Europe, very much like September weather in Scotland. During the whole journey the only rainy day I experienced was the one at Resht.

Now as regards expenses. The following sums include incidental items as well as the hire of horses:—

		Krans.
Two horses, &c. from	Bushire to Shiraz	100
,, ,,	Shiraz to Ispahan	200
,, ,,	Ispahan to Tehran ...	180
,, ,,	Tehran to the Caspian .	200

The hire of post-horses in Persia is one kran per farsukh, which is about three and a half English miles, and twenty-five krans being the equivalent of an English sovereign, the above 680 krans amount to a little under £27, which when divided by 900, the approximate number of miles in the distance travelled, makes the rate for two horses per mile, a trifle over seven pence.

The following sums also include incidental expenses, allowing a liberal margin for that purpose:—

	Roubles.
From Enzoli to Czaritzen, 1st class in steamer...	55
,, Czaritzen to Berlin by train, 1st class.....	70
,, Berlin to London	£8

A rouble being about 2*s.* 8*d.*; therefore 125 roubles equal £16-13-4, which + £8 + £27 makes the cost of the whole journey about £50, whereas the cost of travelling between the same points by sea amounts to £106, viz. £26 from Bushire to Bombay, and say £80 from Bombay to England viâ Brindisi; but the difference in expense is only a small matter compared with the charming novelty of the Perso-Russian route, and the advantage of travelling through districts of great historic and political interest, not to speak of the important fact, in a postal point of view, of the possibility of diminishing the present period occupied in transit of the mails by at least a week.

OUTWARD BOUND.

Before commencing the history of my outward journey, I may be allowed to mention, as a point of interest to those who like myself have suffered from fever, that during the entire period of my sojourn at home I had not a single attack, though wet through several times, there having been only one dry day out of the fifteen I spent in Scotland; but this cannot be called unusual October weather in that country.

At 8 o'clock P.M. of the 23rd October I left Victoria Station, and arrived in Paris about 7 o'clock on the following morning. The night was cold and the Straits exceedingly rough; and, there being a crowd of passengers on the little steamer in which I crossed, the journey was not particularly comfortable.

Leaving the Lyons station on the evening of the same day, I arrived in Turin the evening following. Here I stopped for the night and went to the opera. I started by the 5 A.M. train next morning for Bologna, and arriving there changed carriages, joining the mail train for Brindisi, which was reached at 3 A.M. on the 27th, and I immediately embarked on board the P. and O. steamer, which started for Alexandria two hours afterwards. Shortly after embarking I was seized with shivering, which proved to be the commencement of a violent attack of intermittent fever. There were 170 passengers on board, and the entire saloon was taken up by lady passengers. Mine happened to be one of the two top berths in a miserable little cabin close to the hold hatchway, a most unsuitable bed for an invalid. And were it not for the good-nature of the three other gentlemen who shared the small cabin with me—particularly Mr. R., who occupied the berth under mine, and of whose kindness I shall always cherish a grateful remembrance—I should have been very uncomfortable indeed. On the alternate day I had another very severe attack; and a third began just as the steamer anchored at Alexandria. This was in the morning of the 31st, and the paroxysm occurring just then almost caused an interruption in my journey, as the Austrian Lloyds' steamer *Hungaria*, in which I intended to embark for Beyrout, had the "blue peter" flying, and steam getting ready for going to sea. On finding, however, that I had a couple of hours to spare, I lay down quietly to the *sweating stage* of the attack, and was so far recovered in that period that I was able to get up, dress, and go on board the steamer *Hungaria* in good time. This was a very superior passenger steamer, the cabin accommodation being beyond all praise, and the table also very good. On the 1st of November the *Hungaria* stopped at Port Said for six hours,

and the next day (Sunday, the 2nd November) cast anchor at Jaffa. The bay of this port is much exposed on its western aspect, and subject, therefore, to violent commotion from the sudden setting in of westerly breezes.

I went on shore in company with another passenger, and paid a visit, under the guidance of an American boy (who helped to support himself and his mother by acting as guide and interpreter to travellers), to the house said to have belonged to Simon the tanner, and to be the place where Peter saw the vision; then to the bazaar; afterwards to two villages recently built on the northern outskirts of the town. These are inhabited by German colonists, who, impressed with the belief that the return of the Jews to the Holy Land is an event that may any day occur, have emigrated thither to witness the actual fulfilment of the prophecy. One of the villages was originally built by American colonists who had become imbued with the same conviction. In this instance a scheming adventurer persuaded a number of simple and too confiding people to place themselves under his management, and brought them from the United States to this spot, and, with a small portion of the funds placed in his keeping by the community, built a few wooden tenements, and shortly afterwards decamped with the greater portion of the money, leaving his poor misguided followers to their fate. The colony soon afterwards suffered from fever, which carried off numbers of the poor people; and, from one cause or another, the only remnant of this wonderful immigration at present to be found is the boy who acted as our guide, and his widowed mother.

At Jaffa there are two hotels, neither of them, I presumed, first class; still, such as they are, travellers must find them a great convenience. Large quantities of orange and citron are exported from Jaffa. Between Jaffa and Beyrout I had as fellow-passengers a party of Germans of the labouring class. They all seemed very devout religionists, and at night sang hymns on deck in the moonlight, to which I was glad that none of the other passengers objected, as the singing was good, and, moreover, its being stopped would have greatly shocked and disappointed the poor people.

I now began to make inquiries as to the rumours of malignant fever and plague in and around Damascus that I had heard and read of before leaving England; and the result was anything but reassuring. A German traveller and fellow-passenger on board the S.S. *Hungaria*, who had quite recently been at Beyrout, informed me that the journey I contemplated making on land straight across the desert, from Damascus to Baghdad, was entirely beyond the possibility of accomplishment,

and strongly advised me to proceed viâ Alexandria, Aleppo, Diarbekir, Moosul, and down the Tigris, a much longer but perfectly safe journey.* His account was that fever of a severe and very fatal type raged in the Damascus districts; that the journey viâ the desert had hitherto been made by two Europeans only, both of whom nearly died afterwards from exhaustion; and that, worst of all, the first few days' march in the desert from Damascus was infested with robbers, who had ransacked the three previous mails,* taking also, in one instance, the postman's camel, thus compelling him to turn back. Notwithstanding all this, I determined not to alter my purpose, until I had seen Damascus and decided for myself.

I arrived at Beyrout on the morning of the 3rd of November, and remained there during the day, taking my seat in the evening in the coach that runs nightly, carrying mails, between Beyrout and Damascus. The distance by road between these two cities, is travelled by *diligence* in fourteen hours, there being a fairly good macadamized road all the way, though for the first half, the ground is very uneven.

The country as you approach Damascus is dreary and uninteresting. Closer to the city a tributary of the river Pharpar corresponds with the roadside, and gives growth to a variety of trees, the most numerous species being the poplar.

Damascus, like most Oriental cities, looks best as you approach it for the first time. The lacquered domes and minarets give it a picturesque appearance, as seen at a little distance. The town is situated in an oasis, watered by the Pharpar, on the outskirts of the Anti-Libanus, near the western margin of the great Syrian desert.

Immediately on arrival I was conducted to the excellent hotel kept by Demetrius, a Greek, and having bathed and taken breakfast, I procured a guide and betook myself at once to the British Vice-Consulate. I there found Mr. Green, the Vice-Consul, just despatching a post to Baghdad. This was the re-despatch of the post that had last been robbed. Notwithstanding this dark look-out, being pressed for time, and fearing to overstay my leave, I wished to proceed on my journey forthwith. But on Mr. Green informing me that another mail would be despatched on the 6th, two days later, I thought it best to avail myself of these two days, the better to provide myself with such necessaries as would be required on the march, and was guided in this matter by the Vice-Consul. Indeed I shall not readily forget the prompt assistance, the encouragement, the hearty kindness and agreeable society

* There is a private fortnightly mail by camel from Damascus to Baghdad.

for which I was here indebted to H. M.'s Vice-Consul at Damascus and his amiable lady. Here also I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of the Rev. Mr. Wright, a learned numismatologist, an accomplished student of antiquaries, and a caterer of articles of *vertù*.

The bazaars in Damascus are far more Oriental than those of modern Eastern cities. The street called *the Long Bazaar* is said to be "the street that was called Straight," and is now lined with all sorts of articles of European and native produce. The assertion regarding this bazaar having been the street that was called Straight is, like most of the guides' stories, open to grave doubt, and, in like manner, the statement regarding a spot they pointed out to me on the wall of the city as that where Paul was let down in a basket. And still more to be questioned is the possibility of their being able to conduct you to the very spot in the neighbouring desert where the great apostle was "struck down as by lightning." Either my zeal was deficient, or my incredulity too strong, or both, to take the trouble of proceeding to the sacred spot alluded to.

Those who wish to procure a dagger or hunting-knife, or, in short, a real Damascus blade of any sort, in Damascus at the present day, will be much disappointed, as there is no such thing now to be had in the place, the art of blade-making having died out long ago, and all the manufactured articles since bought up and carried to every quarter of Europe, where the fortunate possessors, treasure the specimens they may own, as heirlooms in a family. There is certainly still a pretty brisk trade carried on in weapons in Damascus, but these are almost all of Persian manufacture, transported to Damascus as an article of commerce. Many of these Ispahan blades are really of excellent temper and workmanship, but to the eye of a connoisseur still inferior to what has given quite a separate celebrity to the modern capital of Syria. Silk fabrics and embroidery, both of exquisite finish, are still manufactured in this city, and sold, I believe, at about two-thirds of the price the same articles, of inferior texture and workmanship, can be procured for, in other places in the East. Furs of every variety, but not, so far as I saw, of superior quality, were also obtainable, as in the colder months, this article enters largely into the wearing apparel of the inhabitants.

Turkish bathing establishments, furnished with first-rate shampooing requisites, were scattered over the town. But, notwithstanding the gorgeous display of these useful places of public resort, I did not patronize any of them, preferring my own quiet, unpretentious tub of a morning.

Formerly Christians were the victims of great oppression in Syria generally, but especially in Damascus, even subsequent to the punishment inflicted on the Turks by the French on account of the massacre of the Christian inhabitants in 1860 by the former. But now Christian, Turk and Jew seem to fraternize quite harmoniously.

Everything being got ready for my departure, I arranged to start on the morning of the 6th with the post for Baghdad. The equipment for the journey, consisting of a camel, a rude saddle, a waterskin, a sheepskin coat, an *aba* (Arab cloak), and an Arab head-dress, with some other trifles, cost in all £15. My wearing apparel consisted of a spare suit of outer garments and six changes of under-clothing, all easily contained in a small Gladstone bag. For the support of the inner man I purchased a variety of dried fruits, viz. raisins, apricots, figs, walnuts, and Barcelona nuts; also biscuit, rusk, some tins of sardines, a quantity of coffee, some French chocolate, and a Dutch cheese, being obliged to take what I could find in the place. I had a tiny cooking apparatus and spirit-lamp, but never used either, as I found the two Arabs who were with me very dexterous at lighting a fire, and their mode of setting to work in the preparation of coffee, or baking a coarse cake, was peculiar to themselves, or to Arabs at any rate, and was much speedier, if it had few other merits, than anything new-fangled that science or art can introduce. Unfortunately the only tinned provisions left in the Damascus markets were sardines and lobsters, and, not wishing to run the risk of indigestion from the latter,—a frequent consequence of eating tinned lobsters,—I confined myself to the former, and found them to answer my purpose admirably. Those who would avoid disappointment under such circumstances would do well to make up their minds beforehand to subsist on such simple fare as time and place can command, otherwise it were much better for them to stay at home; and to such as prefer the latter I extend my commiseration, for to them the exquisite pleasure of *roughing it* on a strange journey must always be denied.

Fortunately I had time, before the despatch of the mail for Baghdad on the 4th, to write a note to Colonel Herbert, British Resident and Consul-General in Turkish Arabia, informing him of my intention of starting from Damascus on the 6th. Accordingly I set out on the afternoon of that date, riding on horseback as far as Gumere, where I halted for the night. Mr. Green and Mr. Wright accompanied me to the outskirts of Damascus, and thence all the way to Bagdad I had to do my best without the aid of my mother-tongue. The Vice-Con-

sul kindly recommended me to the good offices of the Sheikh on the outposts of civilization, whose head-quarters is generally at Gumere, and this recommendation had the desired effect. Indeed it is possible (and for this supposition I am alone responsible) that this same chief had himself something to do with the previous robberies; and I at the time suspected that the good treatment I received from him was the combined result of several circumstances, chiefest of which was, I believe, the respect he entertained for Mr. Green and the power represented by that gentleman, gratitude for former favours, and the present I myself made him of a quantity of coffee, a coat, and a small sum of money. For, though a chief, and to a certain extent a ruler, this sheikh was yet, in the estimation of a European, a very poor man. He was very poorly dressed, barefooted, rode a puny little horse with the scantiest and poorest of trappings, and was armed with a spear only. So unpretentious indeed was the outward appearance of this desert potentate, that although he himself accompanied me for about fifteen miles into the desert, not knowing more than a few words of Arabic, I was long in expectation of seeing the chief of whom I had been informed by Mr. Green, and who I understood was to meet me somewhere. And it was only after practising a circuitous system of signs that I became aware of the honour that I was unconsciously receiving in having the chief himself as an escort. At 3 P.M. we dismounted, had coffee, something to eat, coffee again, and bade good-bye to the chief, who, having assured me (so far as I could make out) that there was no further danger from robbers, retraced the path to Gumere. About sunset we resumed our journey (myself, the postman whose services I entertained, and another Arab) in dead silence.

From this to Baghdad, each day's march across the Syrian desert being so much alike, the best idea of the journey will be got from the notes extracted from my diary, which I here insert.

Damascus, Friday, November 6th, 1874.—Started at noon on horseback, and arrived at the village of Gumere, distant from Damascus about 20 miles, at 8.30 P.M., the road good, and the direction almost due east. A small town was passed to the left near Damascus, and a village to the right further on. The district between Damascus and Gumere well watered, fertile, and a good deal cultivated. Low barren hills stretch parallel to the road on the left. Hardly any trees to be seen. Spent the night at Gumere.

November 7th.—Mount camel for the first time in my life, and water for the journey at a small stream a little to the east

of Gumere. The hills to the left disappear. Atmosphere delightfully cool and pleasant; road good, desert level and barren. Passed by a herd of fine gazelle; started three hares of a small species (conies). Stopped from 3 P.M. till sunset, and resumed a perfectly silent march, fearing to be attacked by robbers. Dismounted and slept for three hours towards morning.

8th.—Very much like preceding day's march; no water on the road; stopped an hour and a half at noon, allowing the camels to browse on what little coarse herbage the desert produced; stopped again at sunset for the same purpose; saw two or three hares in the course of the day. Desert very gently undulating, and affording sparsely, a coarse weed, on which the camels fed as they went along. Slept six hours towards morning.

9th.—March very much the same as the preceding. Saw mirage to the right, and at some distance on either side small mound-like hills. Slept six hours at night.

10th.—More mirage; vegetation very scant. Saw an encampment far away to the left. Stopped one hour at 9 A.M., and another at sunset. Weather all along beautiful; ground in parts stony. Slept four hours at night.

11th.—Same sort of country, very gently undulating, desert only a little more broken in surface with rugged prominences that could hardly be called hills. Slept all night near an encampment of miserable-looking, but evidently happy people, calling themselves Selieb.* Here we watered for the second time, there being no well between Gumere and this spot.

12th.—Low level desert all the march.

13th.—Arrived at second well, and watered; ground a good deal broken; saw old ruins close to the well, and another a little further on, and numbers of large red-legged partridges sitting on the ledges of a rocky prominence a little further still; these birds allowed us to pass within a few yards of them without ever stirring. Stopped as usual in the forenoon and again before sunset for meals. Slept three hours towards morning.

14th.—Marched all day over barren and almost leafless desert; passed two old towers. Slept three hours at night.

15th.—Arrived at the village of Guathie, near the Euphrates; when approaching this village, my companions, apprehending the too close proximity of robbers, raised an alarm, and set to flight, I following as fast as possible; but, what with the coarse trot of my camel, and the great difficulty of getting her to move out of a slow walk, I soon made up my mind to be caught, in preference to running any further: fortunately the alarm turned out to be groundless.

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* A Christian sect but extremely ignorant of Christianity.

16*th.*—In approaching the Euphrates we found the atmosphere impregnated with the odour of sulphur, which was emitted from petroleum springs close to the banks of the river, near the village of Hait. Here we crossed, with our camels, in a rudely constructed barge, being pulled across by men wading with a rope; we then kept by the left bank for some distance, and stopped for the night, starting very early on the following morning. Kept parallel to, and on an average, about half a mile from the river till near night, when we began to shape our course across Mesopotamia, stopping for the night at 9 P.M. Ground along the banks of the river well cultivated and fertile, the water being drawn for irrigation from the river by means of undershot water-wheels.

17*th.*—Travelled all day due east, and stopped six hours at night with a native encampment.

18*th.*—Arrived at Baghdad at midday, having had a most disagreeable morning's march, owing to the coming on of one of the usual dust-storms of these parts.

With little deviation a due easterly course was followed all the way, as shown by a small pocket compass, and the ground travelled over was all that could be desired for marching.

To recapitulate briefly, the whole distance between Damascus and Baghdad was level, richly alluvial, and cultivable, and capable therefore of being rendered fertile; and were it decided to construct a railway between these two points, the line all the way, a distance of about 450 miles, might be as straight as an arrow, nor would there be throughout (if I may venture an opinion on such a question) the slightest shadow of an engineering difficulty to contend with. On approaching Baghdad, on account of the dust-storm that prevailed at the time, I was not so favourably impressed with the appearance of the city as I had expected, or under more favourable circumstances perhaps might have been. Near the outskirts of the town I found a *cavass* with a horse, sent to await my arrival by Colonel Herbert. The cavass informed me that this was the third day he had come to meet me, and that the day prior to my arrival Colonel Herbert had ridden out a long way in the desert in quest of me. I afterwards learnt that the Resident, knowing the dangerous nature of the road I was to come by, had, from that kind solicitude for the welfare of others so characteristic of him, begun to entertain fears for my safety, and had gone out into the desert to find out if anything had been seen or heard of me.

Here it may be said my journey ended, for the remainder was accomplished by taking my passage in the river steamer *City of London* from Baghdad, down the Tigris and part of

the Shat-el Arab, to Bussorah, and thence in the B. I. S. N. S.S. *Punjaub* down the remainder of the Shat-el-Arab and across the head of the Persian Gulf to Bushire.

During my stay in Baghdad I was the guest of Colonel and Mrs. Herbert, whose genial kindness and hearty hospitality cannot be enhanced by any eulogium of mine.

The time occupied in travelling between London and Bushire was 29 days; as follows:—

From London to Beyrout viâ Alexandria, 11 days; Beyrout to Damascus, 1 day; Damascus to Baghdad, 12 days; Bagdad to Bussorah, 4 days; thence to Bushire, 1 day.

The expenses of the journey, including incidental items, were as follows:—

London to Alexandria	£28
Alexandria to Beyrout	6
Beyrout to Bagdad	20
Baghdad to Bushire	12
	£66

Thus the journey home and the journey out occupied about the same time, though the routes were widely different, and the means of travelling as well. The former was the most laborious, but by far the most interesting and agreeable, notwithstanding the hard work.

GEO. WATERS.

Bushire, July 18th, 1875.

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